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General Assembly
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Monday, 3 December 2001, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Han Seung-soo ..... (Republic of Korea)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 42 (*continued*)

The situation in the Middle East

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are witnessing the deterioration of the situation in the Middle East with the most serious crisis experienced in the area in recent years. The spiral of violence and State terrorism, with the death of innocent civilians and the desperation of millions of Palestinians and Arabs, systematically destroy the hope that serious and constructive dialogue can open the long path to peace.

Occupied Arab Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese territories continue to be occupied in flagrant violation of a broad range of General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. The inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to the creation of its own independent and sovereign State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, continues to be denied. Illegal Israeli colonialist settlement continues in occupied Arab territories, whose legitimate inhabitants are expelled from their lands. Grave violations of international humanitarian law and human rights of the Palestinian people and other Arab peoples under Israeli occupation are committed daily. Thousands of dead and tens of thousands wounded by the use of heavy and high-technology weapons testify to the fact that not even the right to life is respected.

We awakened this morning to terrible images of missile attacks by the Israeli army. Extrajudicial killings, selective assassinations, torture and brutal repression, including the destruction of homes, are carried out before our very eyes.

Economic pressure against the most vulnerable population is strengthened through embargoes, closures, taxes, the withholding of financial transfers and the flagrant daily violation of the agreements between the parties. To the physical and psychological blows one must add the flagrant violations of the right to food, education, health and development of millions of people in this part of the world. The coarse manipulation by the media that control information globally habitually conceals and distorts the facts and deceives public opinion, serving in a disciplined way the political interests of their Governments.

Innocent Israeli civilians, unfortunately, are also victims of the spiral of violence and terror caused by the policy of their Government. Cuba emphatically condemns the terrorist suicide bombings that took place over the weekend in Jerusalem and Haifa. There are many forces within Israel that are opposed to the continuation of the war and that share with neighbouring peoples the desire for peaceful coexistence and mutual respect.

There will not be a just and lasting peace if Israel does not denounce its occupation policy. There will be no peace if the legitimate interests of all the peoples of the region are not taken into consideration. There will be no peace if the Security Council does not implement

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its many resolutions or if it does not use its broad powers. There will be no peace if one of the permanent members of the Council continues to use the veto to impede the implementation of those resolutions.

There also will be no real progress in the global campaign against terrorism if those who claim to be the leaders of this campaign protect in the Security Council the exercise of State terrorism against the Palestinian and Arab peoples under occupation. Security Council reform that will eliminate, or at least temporarily curb, use of the veto and put an end to the double standard typical of that organ is urgent.

The recent history of the Middle East and of Palestine might have been different had the United States not vetoed 36 draft Security Council resolutions since 1972. It is a tragic paradox that a permanent member of the Security Council and the world super-Power should also be the Power that pays for and supplies the aeroplanes, helicopters and state-of-the-art missiles that are used to murder innocent civilians with impunity in that tumultuous region.

It is necessary to put an end to Israel's usurpation and occupation of the Palestinian territories in the West Bank and Gaza, of the Syrian Golan and of areas in southern Lebanon that are under Israeli army control. It is necessary to find a lasting and satisfactory solution for the millions of refugees and displaced persons. All the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly should be fully implemented, particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978). It is urgent to deploy an international force to protect Palestinian civilians. It is essential that the United Nations play a genuine, effective role that would guarantee impartiality in the negotiations.

A solution to the Palestinian problem remains the core of a settlement of the Middle East conflict. There can be no peace or security unless the just demands of the Palestinian are met and unless the usurped Syrian and Lebanese territories are returned.

Nobody denies Israel's right to exist, and the occupying Power must not deny the right of its neighbours to live on their own lands and to engage in peaceful development in independent, sovereign, prosperous nations and States. The Cuban delegation supports the urgent convening of the Conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949.

The community of nations bears a major responsibility and must face it decisively and courageously no matter how difficult it may be. In that effort, the international community can always count on the constructive contribution and the traditional firm support and solidarity of Cuba.

Mr. Pamir (Turkey): I would like at the outset to express, on behalf of my Government and of the Turkish nation, our profound sympathy and deepest condolences to the bereaved families of the victims of the outrageous terrorist attacks which took place last weekend at Jerusalem and Haifa. This morning's news from the region clearly confirms once again the risks involved in a vicious circle of violence.

Turkey has already aligned itself with the statements made on 29 and 30 November on behalf of the European Union on the agenda items entitled "The question of Palestine" and "The situation in the Middle East". That being said, I would like to further address those agenda items and to expound our views on both.

Only four days ago, we commemorated the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, when the Secretary-General reminded us of the growing mistrust and animosity between the Israelis and the Palestinians, which has sadly come to the fore as a result of recurrent violence. The fact is that the escalation of violence has greatly undermined all the noble efforts directed at building bridges of reconciliation and feelings of partnership between those two ancient peoples. Nobody can be proud of the current standstill, which has been inflicted by violence, robbing the region and its peoples of the assurance of healthy prospects for a secure and enlightened future.

More than six months has passed since the Sharm el-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee — in whose work the former President of my country, His Excellency Mr. Süleyman Demirel, participated actively — issued its ground-breaking report. And each precious day that has elapsed and every ominous development that has taken place since then has vindicated the basic wisdom and understanding that shaped the Mitchell report. Today, the implementation of the recommendations contained in that report remains the only viable path towards breaking the circle of violence at long last and reviving the Middle East peace process.

Therefore, and as a corollary, without waiting for any specified period and irrespective of the reason for it, the fighting should stop. Each side should do its utmost to prevent any such occurrence, show restraint and limit its reactions so that the process we all long for — founded on the art of rebuilding confidence and trust instead of cowardice and mistrust — between Israel and the Palestinian Authority can start in earnest. In the same vein, and at the same time, terrorism in all its forms should be renounced unequivocally.

It is high time indeed that all of us fully understood that searching for degrees of sense and reason in acts of terrorism is futile, not to mention self-defeating, anti-humanitarian and downright dangerous. We would like to hope that the international coalition against terrorism forged in the aftermath of the horrendous attacks of 11 September will encourage both parties to seek lasting peace. It was in that spirit that we welcomed the agreement between President Arafat and Foreign Minister Peres in late September, which was unfortunately marred once again by the continuation of wanton violence.

We really cannot lose our hope for peace. None who have the prosperity and well-being of future generations in mind and in sight can allow themselves to lose their hope for peace. That is why we have been reminding the parties of their responsibility before the flow of history to curb and then eradicate violence and to de-escalate tension on the ground, so that they can meet each other's fundamental needs: security in word and reality for Israel, and viable political prospects for the Palestinians. Their request to gain their inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination and to a State of their own, is a just cause.

It is only through the resumption of peace talks that the international community can expect to see a lasting and comprehensive agreement that will enable Israel and Palestine to live side by side within mutually recognized borders. The realistic and well-balanced Mitchell report and the Tenet plan, with its clearly defined parameters, constitute the pillars of a genuine road map that will lead the region to peace to be achieved on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace.

While Turkey supports all international efforts directed at finding a solution to this problem, we deem the active involvement of the United States to be necessary in this sphere as well. We welcome heartily the commitment of the United States to a just peace in the Middle East, as expressed by President Bush and Secretary of State Powell on 10 and 19 November respectively. It is worthwhile to repeat the prospect put forward by the Secretary of State, as it describes a positive vision. He foresees the establishment of a State of Palestine which will live side by side with its neighbour Israel in peace, security and dignity. That State should assure the security of Israel and recognize its legitimacy.

We very much hope that this will be the point of departure for enduring peace, and a station at which to leave behind once and for all the tragedy of the past, and from which to depart towards a secure and enlightened future for the Middle East. It is in that spirit that we call upon the parties to show leadership of historic proportions and to exercise maximum restraint in order not to let themselves be derailed from the track towards this noble vision. Turkey, for its part, stands ready to contribute to these efforts and to continue to act as a facilitator.

While the Palestinian-Israeli conflict lies at the core of the Middle East problem, we must not lose sight of the other tracks. We are concerned that the process on the Syrian track has come to a standstill. We hope that peace talks on this track will soon resume. In this context, we welcomed the Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon in accordance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978) and consider it to be a crucial step in the right direction.

Mr. Al-Hussein (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): The question of the Middle East, the core of which is the question of Palestine, remains an important item on this Assembly's agenda, especially as the discussion of this item is taking place at a time when the Palestinian people is a target of acts of military aggression by the Israeli occupation authorities and of their use of unjustified force. This will only result in more bloodshed, throw the Middle East peace process into an even deeper crisis and cause further deterioration in the situation between the two parties, as well as in the entire region.

How can we be convinced that peace is the ultimate goal when Israel continues to impose blockades against the Palestinian people, to implement assassination schemes, to make incursions into the territories under the control of the Palestinian National

Authority and to build settlements, all of which are contrary to the principle of land for peace. Israel denies the rights of the Palestinians; yet, justice is the basis for peace, and peace is the framework for security.

Jordan firmly believes that the resolution of this conflict will not be possible through the use of force or by coercive or security measures. In this regard, we strongly condemn the targeting and killing of civilian populations on both sides. Indeed, there is no alternative but the return of the two parties to the negotiating table as equal partners seeking a settlement that would ensure their legitimate rights and their future. This will not be achieved unless reciprocal, parallel steps are taken on the basis of the accords and obligations concluded between the Palestinian and Israeli sides. First and foremost, the use of the Israeli military machine against the Palestinian people must end.

Taking these steps would constitute the right approach towards implementing the Mitchell commission's recommendations, which aim primarily at creating conditions conducive to a return to the negotiating table. Starting the final status negotiations would symbolize the urgent priority to achieve the primary objective of the peace process — namely, the fulfilment of national Palestinian rights, the establishment of a viable Palestinian State on Palestinian territory and the provision of security for Israel.

Jordan's concept of peace, as we have repeatedly stated in this Assembly, is that it must be just, lasting and comprehensive. This concept has been underlined by the international parties directly involved in the Middle East question. Our firm commitment to peace within this concept is based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). These two resolutions, as well as other relevant General Assembly resolutions, have not yet been implemented, despite the passage of several decades since their adoption.

At this point, we must once again emphasize the United Nations role and responsibility towards the question of the Middle East, the peace process and the need for the revival of this role. We further underscore the responsibility to support the efforts and endeavours to push the peace process forward towards its desired objectives. The United Nations, its Charter, resolutions and provisions are the basic norms for the resolution of disputes, and they govern the basic rule of international law.

The peace process has been based on recognized and firm principles, primarily the principle of land for peace. We cannot understand how justice can be fulfilled without full Israeli withdrawal from all Palestinian and other Arab occupied territories.

Jordan welcomes the announcement by President George W. Bush regarding sponsoring a United States solution that would ensure the existence of two States, including a Palestinian State on occupied Palestinian territory on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions. This would complete the international consensus on the basic requirement for achieving peace in the region.

It is our hope that the United States efforts will continue, with the support of the European Union countries, Russia and the international community as a whole. We also welcome the thrust of United States Secretary of State Colin Powell's statement on the need to end Israeli occupation, in line with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

Comprehensive peace must include Israel's withdrawal from occupied Syrian territory back to the 4 June 1967 lines and a complete withdrawal from the remaining occupied Lebanese territory on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

There is an international juridical consensus that East Jerusalem is part of the West Bank territory that was occupied in 1967. As such, it is subject to Security Council resolutions. Indeed, the Council has treated the City of Jerusalem as a special case since the beginning of the Israeli occupation, and all along it has adopted a series of resolutions that reject annexation by Israel of East Jerusalem. Those resolutions also reject all Israeli measures and legislation aimed at changing the character of the Holy City and the works undertaken in order to transform its demographic and topographic character.

Therefore, all the announcements made repeatedly by Israeli officials regarding Jerusalem as the eternal capital of Israel are contrary to all foundations of the peace process. East Jerusalem is an occupied territory under international resolutions, and it is the spiritual centre of the three divine religions. Also, we would like to see Jerusalem as an ideal, noble symbol of peace and cooperation. This will not be

achieved unless and until Israel withdraws from the territories occupied in 1967, including East Jerusalem, and a return of those territories to their legitimate owners, with Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian State.

The question of the Palestinian refugees who were forced out of their homeland in 1947, 1948 and 1967, and those who were deported over the many and long years of occupation is still waiting for a just solution under international law and United Nations resolutions, especially General Assembly resolution 194 (III), which called for the rights of the Palestinian people to return or to receive compensation for their suffering during years of deportation, exile and occupation. The solution of the question of refugees remains one of the most important cornerstones of peace and security in the region.

In closing, my delegation would like to affirm categorically our full support for a comprehensive peace and the need to focus our efforts on stopping the deterioration of conditions in the occupied Arab territories.

Mr. Chaudhary (Nepal): The situation in the Middle East is still volatile. Numerous lives have been lost since September 2000. Both sides — the Palestinians and the Israelis — have suffered a great deal due to the continuing violence in the region, which, unfortunately, has not seen peace for the last five decades, from the time of the United Nations partition plan in 1947.

The establishment of a just, durable and comprehensive peace in the Middle East will be possible only with the full implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Nepal has always placed emphasis on the full implementation of those resolutions. We believe that both sides need to exercise the utmost restraint in order to create an environment conducive to giving peace a chance.

Nepal is deeply concerned at the outbreak of violence in the Middle East, which has resulted in the loss of precious human lives and in the destruction of property. We very much look forward to seeing the adoption of some practical measures before serious negotiations are brought back on track with a view to restoring lasting peace.

In this regard, we believe that implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the Mitchell committee, released last April, and the Tenet ceasefire plan can, even under the present circumstances, play a very positive role in reducing tensions, which are running so high.

We believe that the international community's attention should be drawn to the need to ensure the exercise of the inalienable right of the Palestinians to self-determination, with the creation of an independent state. The recent announcement by the United States Government of its intention to become more closely involved in efforts to bring about peace in the Middle East has also encouraged many of us who would like to see a lasting peace established in the region sooner rather than later.

The violent acts in the region of the Middle East must cease. Only a return to negotiations involving all of the parties concerned can lead to the promotion of peace and prosperity in the Middle East. The need of the hour is urgently to reverse the situation and to try to build on the achievements recorded so far with a view to establishing stability in the region.

The President: I have just received a request to suspend the meeting for half an hour for consultations. If there is no objection, I will suspend the meeting now.

The meeting was suspended at 10.35 a.m. and resumed at 11.40 a.m.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolutions A/56/L.23 and A/56/L.24.

We turn first to draft resolution A/56/L.23, entitled "Jerusalem".

Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that, since its introduction, Pakistan has become a sponsor of draft resolution A/56/L.23.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Algeria, Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burundi, Cambodia, Canada, Cape Verde, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic,

Ecuador, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guyana, Honduras, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, Nauru

Abstaining:

Australia, Haiti, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nicaragua, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, United States of America, Vanuatu

Draft resolution A/56/L.23 was adopted by 130 votes to 2, with 10 abstentions (resolution 56/31).

[Subsequently, the delegations of Afghanistan, Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Gabon, Guinea, Haiti, Hungary, Lithuania, Malawi, New Zealand the Republic of Moldova and South Africa informed the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour.]

The President: Draft resolution A/56/L.24 is entitled "The Syrian Golan".

Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that, since its introduction, Pakistan has become a sponsor of draft resolution A/56/L.24.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Bolivia, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Ghana, Guyana, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jamaica, Jordan, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Tuvalu, United States of America

Abstaining:

Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Benin, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Haiti, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Monaco, Nauru, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tonga, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Yugoslavia

Draft resolution A/56/L.24 was adopted by 90 votes to 5, with 54 abstentions (resolution 56/32).

[Subsequently, the delegations of Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Guinea, Malawi, and South Africa informed the

Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour; the delegations of Hungary and the Republic of Moldova had intended to abstain.]

The President: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of vote on the resolution just adopted. May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Estremé (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Argentine Republic has voted in favour of draft resolution A/56/L.24, on the Syrian Golan, because we consider that its essential aspect is linked to the unlawfulness of the acquisition of territories by force. Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter of the United Nations prohibits the use or threat of use of force against the territorial integrity of a State. This constitutes an imperative norm of international law.

At the same time, I would like to clarify the position of the delegation of Argentina with respect to operative paragraph 6 of the draft resolution. My country's vote does not necessarily prejudge the reference to the line contained in this paragraph.

Mr. De Ruyt (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to take the floor to explain the vote by the European Union on the draft resolution on the Syrian Golan.

The European Union is firmly committed to a just, sustainable and comprehensive settlement of the Middle East situation on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and also on the principles of the Madrid Conference, particularly that of land for peace, and the Oslo accords.

It is with great concern that we view the deterioration of the situation in the Middle East and the escalation of violence to a level unknown for years. We call upon the Israeli and Palestinian sides immediately to return, without preconditions, to the negotiating table on the basis of the recommendations of the Mitchell report and the Tenet plan, which must be implemented fully and without delay.

The European Union believes that a comprehensive, just and sustainable peace in the region will not be complete without the Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese tracks. These negotiations must be undertaken as soon as possible in order to reach an agreement in conformity with the same principles.

We think that this draft resolution on the Syrian Golan contains geographic references which could prejudge the outcome of bilateral negotiations. For that reason, as in previous years, the European Union has abstained from the vote.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote after the vote.

We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 42.

Agenda item 41 (*continued*)

Question of Palestine

Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/56/35)

Report of the Secretary-General (A/56/642)

Draft resolutions (A/56/L.19, A/56/L.20, A/56/L.21, A/56/L.22)

The President: Members will recall that the General Assembly held a debate on agenda item 41 at its 69th and 70th plenary meetings, on 29 and 30 November 2001.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolutions A/56/L.19, A/56/L.20, A/56/L.21 and A/56/L.22, as orally revised.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to explain their votes before the voting. May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seat.

Mr. Lancry (Israel) (*spoke in French*): I am grateful for the opportunity to express my views on the voting on the draft resolutions on the question of Palestine.

Normally, this kind of voting hardly inspires us to offer an explanation, given how accustomed Israel has become to the unfailing ritual whereby it invariably finds itself, year after year, in splendid yet scarcely enviable isolation. Today, however, following the surge of Palestinian terrorism and the carnage of the last 48 hours in Jerusalem and Haifa, we are compelled to

break with the traditional silent objection adopted by my delegation in previous years.

Indeed, we must tell the General Assembly today that, in the face of the Palestinian terrorist furor, we cannot remain indifferent. We cannot accept an endorsement — based on a reflex conditioned by the shackles of automatic majorities and the burden of prejudice forged in the arbitrary nature of alliances and inalienable alignments — of Palestinian terrorist attacks that corrupt any possibility of resuming negotiations.

Peace, according to the Palestinians, is a matter of strategic choice. And yet, their strategy for peace is heavily dependent on terrorist tactics, the devastating effects of which obscure the visibility and credibility of the peace process. Unless it considers Palestinian terrorism in its most abject and perverse form to be a kind of national resistance — and thus ultimately acceptable — the General Assembly must make a moral choice today and distance itself from certain Palestinian terrorist practices, the barbarism of which has no equal but in the suicidal and fanatical impulse that underlies it.

I urgently appeal here and now to my colleagues in many delegations to disengage themselves from draft resolutions that would endow Palestinian terrorism with international legitimacy, in flagrant contradiction to acts that no national aspiration, no matter how noble, can justify. I appeal here to those of my colleagues who are people of conscience. I appeal to colleagues whose alignment is not inevitably equivalent to blind partisanship. I appeal to colleagues who, in recent weeks and months, have courageously asserted their rejection of terrorism in all its forms and who should be able to demonstrate their independence, here and now, as they face a decisive and crucial choice.

In the voting on issues connected to the question of Palestine, Israel usually entertains hopes of rather modest support. The importance of the voting today lies in the quality of the message to be sent by the General Assembly to the Palestinians. That is up to the General Assembly to determine in its soul and conscience.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): As in previous years, the Russian Federation will vote in favour of the draft resolution on the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine, contained in draft resolution A/56/L.22.

At the same time, I wish to report that, yesterday, the Foreign Ministry of the Russian Federation issued a statement in which it strongly condemned the bloody terrorist act carried out in Jerusalem on 1 December and described that act as cruel provocation aimed at undermining attempts to find a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation. We express our condolences to the families of the victims of that monstrous crime and once again call most categorically on the leadership of the Palestinian Authority to take effective measures to curb the extremists.

We are convinced that it is now more necessary than ever to intensify efforts to implement the Mitchell and Tenet plans for the normalization of the situation and a resumption of the negotiating process. Accommodating steps must be taken by the Palestinians and Israelis to break the senseless cycle of violence, in which every act of bloodshed, regardless of who may perpetrate it, only leads to an escalation of the crisis and claims more victims.

The Russian Federation, along with its American co-sponsors, the European Union, the United Nations and other parties, will continue to work for the easing of tensions and for returning the situation to the political track.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolutions A/56/L.19, A/56/L.20, A/56/L.21 and A/56/L.22, as orally revised.

We turn first to draft resolution A/56/L.19, entitled "Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People". I should like to announce that, since the introduction of the draft resolution, the following countries have become sponsors: Brunei Darussalam, Namibia, Niger, Togo and Zimbabwe.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Costa

Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Tuvalu, United States of America

Abstaining:

Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Monaco, Nauru, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tonga, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Vanuatu, Yugoslavia

Draft resolution A/56/L.19 was adopted by 106 votes to 5, with 48 abstentions (resolution 56/33).

[Subsequently the delegations of Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon and South Africa informed the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour.]

The President: We turn next to draft resolution A/56/L.20, entitled "Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat". I should like to announce that, since the introduction of the draft resolution, the following countries have become sponsors: Brunei Darussalam, Namibia, the Niger and Zimbabwe.

A record vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Tuvalu, United States of America

Abstaining:

Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Monaco, Nauru, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tonga,

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Vanuatu, Yugoslavia

Draft resolution A/56/L.20 was adopted by 107 votes to 5, with 47 abstentions (resolution 56/34).

[Subsequently, the delegations of Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon and South Africa informed the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour.]

The President: We turn next to draft resolution A/56/L.21, entitled "Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat".

Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that since its introduction, the following countries have become sponsors of draft resolution A/56/L.21: Brunei Darussalam, Namibia, the Niger and Zimbabwe.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), United States of America

Abstaining:

Nauru, Tuvalu, Vanuatu

Draft resolution A/56/L.21 was adopted by 153 votes to 4, with 3 abstentions (resolution 56/35).

[Subsequently, the delegations of Côte d'Ivoire and Gabon informed the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour.]

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/56/L.22, entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine", as orally revised.

Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that since its publication, the following countries have become sponsors of draft resolution A/56/L.22: Brunei Darussalam, Namibia, the Niger, Togo and Zimbabwe.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Ghana, Greece, Grenada,

Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, New Zealand, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Tuvalu, United States of America

Abstaining:

Australia, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Poland, Romania, Rwanda, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Draft resolution A/56/L.22 was adopted by 131 votes to 6, with 20 abstentions (resolution 56/36).

[Subsequently, the delegations of Côte d'Ivoire and Gabon informed the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour.]

The President: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to make statements in explanation of vote after the voting. May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Ovia (Papua New Guinea): Papua New Guinea's position on the question of the right to self-determination is well known in the Assembly, and I do not need to repeat it. It has been reflected in Papua New Guinea's affirmative vote on draft resolutions on this subject in the past. However, Papua New Guinea has abstained in the voting this time.

We believe that peace cannot be achieved through continued violence, such as that occurring in the last several months in the Middle East region. As a Melanesian country and, for that matter, a Pacific island country, we believe that peace can be achieved only through negotiations and discussions with our adversaries to resolve differences and bring about the common peace we all desire.

Papua New Guinea continues to believe that Israel must recognize the right of the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination and, as a result, to have a State. We also believe that Israel has a right to coexist in a safe and secure environment with its neighbours, and the State of Israel must therefore be assured of its right to coexist within safe and secure boundaries.

Papua New Guinea also believes in the purposes of the United Nations as outlined in its Charter. Unless the United Nations is taking action under Chapter VII of the Charter, it must be seen as impartial at all times when dealing with parties to a conflict. It must not be seen as taking a position that could be interpreted to be pre-empting the outcome of any negotiations.

Papua New Guinea believes in the sanctity of life, whether Israeli or Palestinian. It is wrong to commit suicide or to use one's own body as a weapon of destruction. Extrajudicial killings also have no place in a civil society that is founded on the rule of law. By the same token, we are concerned about the implementation of the rule of law, and about governance generally, inside Palestinian-controlled areas. Peaceful coexistence is an uncertain outcome when there are elements in conflict that do not recognize the right of Israel to exist within secure borders.

In our view, these matters are not properly reflected in the draft resolution contained in document A/55/L.22. We have therefore abstained in the voting on the draft resolution.

Mr. Duval (Canada): Canada stresses the need for a peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Indeed, there is no way to resolve the dispute but through diplomatic channels. Violence must end, and negotiation must resume. Both Palestinians and

Israelis continue to suffer, and both must take the necessary steps to end the suffering.

Canada abstained in the voting on draft resolution A/56/L.22 because the text does not sufficiently recognize the violence inflicted against civilians on both sides of the conflict. The horrific events of the past 48 hours demonstrate the tragic scale of civilian suffering. We urge the parties to take the necessary steps to end these senseless cycles of violence.

Mr. Cockx (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to explain the vote of the European Union on the draft resolutions entitled "Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People" and "Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat".

The European Union is convinced that the framework of the peace process, as it was constructed through negotiations and agreements between the parties, represents the only reasonable hope of ending a conflict that, if it continues, can only aggravate the sufferings of the peoples involved. This process has produced a gain that must be preserved, and, more importantly, brought to fruition.

In spite of our deep concern at the ever-deteriorating situation in the Middle East, we continue to call on Israelis and Palestinians to return without preconditions to the path of negotiation on the basis of the recommendations of the Mitchell report and the Tenet plan.

The European Union regrets that the mandates of the two United Nations bodies on the question of Palestine do not sufficiently reflect the spirit of the peace process, which, necessarily and urgently, must be revived. For that reason, the European Union, as in the past, abstained in the voting on the two relevant resolutions.

Mr. Macedo (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation voted in favour of draft resolution A/56/L.22 because we feel that the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine is one of the indispensable elements in the settlement of the conflict in the Middle East.

Nonetheless, we would like to repeat the following observations in relation to the content of the draft resolution's operative paragraph 3.

Mexico observes that one of the postulates of the peace process in the Middle East is the return of land in exchange for peace. The formula of land for peace has demonstrated its usefulness on the path towards the resolution of this specific conflict. However, it would be hazardous to convert it into a universal legal principle and a norm applicable to all conflicts.

Behind that formula is the general principle of international law that military conquest does not confer territorial rights. We all recognize the fundamental norm that the acquisition of territories by means of force is inadmissible. As a corollary to this universal principle, it should be concluded that the totality of any territory occupied in an armed conflict should be returned unconditionally to its legitimate owners. That is why the delegation of Mexico repeats that even though we recognize the political value of that formula, we consider that it is not a very rigorous step to elevate it to the status of a general principle of international law.

Mexico would like once again to appeal for greater precision in the language used to describe a political understanding that is not, nor can be, a universal legal principle. In fact, in the eighth preambular paragraph of draft resolution A/56/L.24, on the Syrian Golan, which the Assembly also adopted at this meeting, reference is made to "the formula of land for peace". That is an expression that we feel much more correctly describes that understanding. The word "formula" is what we would prefer to see in all draft resolutions related to this issue. For Mexico, this is a matter of legal purity of terminology and does not have to do with the substance of the political understanding.

Mr. Harrison (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom fully associates itself with the statement in the debate and the explanation of vote made by the representatives of Belgium on behalf of the European Union.

The United Kingdom also fully supports the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine. My Government believes that to find such a peaceful settlement, both sides in the conflict must make difficult decisions in the cause of peace. Both sides have responsibilities and obligations. Both sides must make courageous compromises.

Draft resolution A/56/L.22, on which we have just voted, is clear about the responsibilities on the Israeli side; we support what the resolution says about

them. But the resolution does not reflect our belief that the Palestinian side must also implement its obligations in particular by making every effort to prevent violence against Israeli civilians, including suicide bomb attacks. The horrific attacks over the weekend lend urgency and weight to this requirement.

More generally, at a time of concern throughout the United Nations about the protection of civilians, the General Assembly has missed an opportunity to register concern in this specific case with balanced language on violence against civilians. For these reasons, the United Kingdom abstained in today's voting on the draft resolution entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine" (A/56/L.22).

Mr. van den Berg (Netherlands): The Netherlands fully supports the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine. For that to come about, both sides will have to face difficult and far-reaching choices. The Netherlands feels that the text of draft resolution A/56/L.22 does not reflect in an even-handed way the obligations and responsibilities of both parties. More specifically, the Netherlands deplores that the current text does not refer to the killing and wounding of civilians, including by means of suicide bomb attacks such as we have witnessed this weekend. For this reason, the Netherlands abstained in the voting on this draft resolution.

Mr. Blazey (Australia): Australia abstained in the voting on draft resolution A/56/L.22, even though we strongly believe that there must be a peaceful settlement of the differences which separate the Palestinian and Israeli peoples. Australia has great sympathy for the losses suffered by both Palestinians and Israelis, and while we acknowledge that the Palestinian civilian population has suffered significantly, we regret that the resolution has not adequately recognized the losses on both sides.

Australia continues to reject the use of violence. We believe there can be no military solution to the present conflict. We urge both sides to seek an early resumption of negotiations for peace based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace.

Mr. Hughes (New Zealand): New Zealand voted in favour of draft resolution A/56/L.22 today, but not without considerable reservations. We would greatly have wished to have seen a more balanced text, particularly in the sixteenth preambular paragraph, which might have acknowledged the high number of deaths and injuries among civilians on both the Palestinian and the Israeli sides, not least in view of the horrific suicide attacks in Haifa and Jerusalem over this last weekend, which New Zealand strongly condemns. We urge the Israeli and Palestinian sides to return urgently and without preconditions to the peace process on the basis of the Mitchell report and the Tenet plan and in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

Mr. Kolby (Norway): Norway continues to reject the use of violence, no least when directed against civilians. The horrific acts over the weekend have reinforced the need for the international community to speak out against indiscriminate acts of violence directed against innocent civilians.

The conflict in the Middle East can never be resolved by the use of violence, and a heavy responsibility lies on both parties to prevent the violence from spinning out of control. The situation demands firm leadership and control, and we were reminded of the need for that by the horrific acts this weekend.

In our view, the need to fully protect all civilians against violent attacks was not sufficiently reflected in the resolution on the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine. The responsibilities on the Israeli side are reflected in the resolution, but the same cannot be said for the responsibilities on the Palestinian side. Norway therefore abstained in the voting.

Ms. Løj (Denmark): Denmark strongly supports the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine. The draft resolution on this issue contained in document A/56/L.22, just adopted, contains many useful elements to be pursued in order to reach this goal. They are fully supported by Denmark.

In order to fully reflect the situation in the region, not least after the tragic events in recent days, Denmark supported the inclusion in the text of wording regarding the prevention of all indiscriminate acts of terror and violence directed at civilians — Palestinians as well as Israelis. Since this was not reflected in the text, Denmark abstained in the voting on the draft resolution contained in document A/56/L.22.

Mr. Loizaga (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): As regards draft resolution A/56/L.22, "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine", the delegation

of Paraguay abstained in the voting, because we would have liked to see in the resolution an appeal in relation to the most recent events that we have witnessed in Israel and in the Palestinian zone. We feel that it is necessary to indicate to both parties the need to provide guarantees of security to the civilian population. That is why we urge both parties to arrive at a peaceful and lasting solution as soon as possible.

Mr. Schumacher (Germany): Belgium, as Presidency of the European Union, has voiced our position as regards the peace process in the Middle East, and we fully associate ourselves with the statement made by our Belgian colleague. However, Germany found it necessary, together with other European Union partners, to abstain in the voting on draft resolution A/56/L.22, "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine". We urge both parties to end the senseless cycle of violence. The urgency and necessity of this, in our opinion, is not reflected in a balanced and even-handed manner in this resolution with regard to the parties concerned. The terrifying attacks on the weekend lent urgency to this requirement. The conflict in the Middle East cannot be resolved by military means or indiscriminate acts of violence against civilians on both sides.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote after the voting.

I now call on the observer of Palestine.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): The observer delegation of Palestine is pleased with the outcome of voting on the draft resolution discussed today. We are deeply grateful to the General Assembly for this clear stance towards the Holy City of Jerusalem and rejection of the actions taken by Israel. No delegation voted against that resolution, except for Israel and, unfortunately, Nauru, for reasons that we cannot understand or know.

The results of the voting show the refusal of the international community to accept Israel's position on Jerusalem; a clear position regarding the State of Palestine, whose establishment is a sine qua non for achieving overall peace in the region; and a clear position of appreciation for the role of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Division for Palestinian Rights and the United Nations special information programme.

Our deep thanks go to the Chairman of the aforementioned Committee, Ambassador Papa Louis Fall, the members of the Bureau and the other members of the Committee, as well as all those who supported and voted in favour of these important resolutions today, especially the sponsors.

The Palestinian leadership has condemned the attacks that took place in Israel over the past few days. The Palestinian leadership expressed its outrage over these terrorist attacks not only because of the human losses they caused on the Israeli side but also because of the damage they inflict on our national cause, on the efforts to resume the peace talks and, last but not least, on the very unity of the Palestinian people.

Yesterday, the Palestinian leadership adopted a series of extraordinary decisions in this regard, including declaring a temporary state of emergency and making it illegal for any Palestinian faction not to comply with a ceasefire.

Today, Israeli helicopter gunships fired many missiles in the area of the offices of Chairman Yasser Arafat and attacked and destroyed two non-military helicopters belonging to the Palestinian Authority. Yesterday, the Israeli occupation forces shot to death five Palestinian martyrs. The day before, they killed two children after sweeping into the outskirts of the city of Jenin. Before that, the occupation forces were continually killing Palestinians, including by extrajudicial executions and planting a time bomb in a civilian neighbourhood, resulting in the deaths of five Palestinian schoolchildren. I wish to note that it was an army that undertook these attacks, and not an unofficial group or even Israeli settlers. Israel, the occupying Power, continues to violate the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949 with deliberate killings, war crimes and State-sponsored terrorism.

The General Assembly has discussed in depth the question of international terrorism, which dominated the Assembly's agenda this year. During that debate, we expressed our position clearly as part of the international consensus. At the same time, we warned against imposing an illegitimate agenda on the international agenda, and most specifically the Israeli agenda.

Israel continues its attempts to impose its own particular agenda. This time it is waging a fight, through its friends in the United States of America, to

take control of the battle against terrorism, to have it work in its favour by linking the campaign of the United States and the international community in Afghanistan to what Israel is doing, trying to project itself as if it were in the same fight. As far as we know, the United States is not an occupying Power in Afghanistan. It has never been that. It has not denied any people its right to self-determination for over 35 years. It did not wage a protracted, oppressive, bloody war against that people. What Israel is doing is lowly; it will not improve its status as an occupying Power, but it will do great damage to the international campaign against terrorism and to the international coalition against terrorism.

Yes, there have been terrorist attacks carried out inside Israel, but this phenomenon started recently, only a few years ago. This is an outcome, and not the reason for the current situation. The reason is the uprooting of the Palestinian people from their homeland and their denial of their own State for more than 50 years. The reason is the Israeli occupation of those Palestinians who remained in Palestine after more than 35 years. The reason is colonialist settlement, taking control of land and water resources, bringing Israeli settlers to the occupied territories and isolating our people in their towns and villages. The reason is suppression, deportation, detentions and assassinations throughout so many years. The reason is war crimes and State-sponsored terrorism.

Despite all that, there is no justification for directing terror against civilians. It does not justify terrorism despite all the pain and suffering. But this explains it and places it in a clear context. More importantly, it prevents Israel from using that as a pretext for completing its efforts to destroy peace in the region and perhaps to demolish the Palestinian Authority and restore the occupation of all Palestinian territory.

The retreat by a limited number of friendly States from voting in favour of the resolution on the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine was a step in the wrong direction. It is not a position against terrorism, because we all stand united against terrorism. It is a position, deliberate or not, of making the fight against terrorism the single most important task in the region. We cannot accept this line of argument. The main task is to put an end to the occupation and to build peace, and in the course of doing that, to resist oppression, violence and terrorism. That position provides a convenient pretext for the Government of Israel to maintain its brutal, bloody campaign against our people, to continue circumventing the implementation of the Mitchell recommendations and, more importantly, to avoid ending its occupation of the Palestinian territory, which is the core issue. We regret that this position is not in line with the statements made by some of those countries and their lip service to establishing a Palestinian State.

However, more important than all that is what I said at the beginning. The strong and clear international position once again sends the message — primarily to Israel, the occupying Power, and to all peoples of the region, including the Palestinian people — that the international community continues to favour the observance of international law, on the side of right and justice, and to favour peace-building efforts in the Middle East region, including the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

I wish to thank all Members. We hope that we will meet again next year under better conditions than those prevailing today.

Mr. Lancry (Israel) (*spoke in French*): I wish to thank the representatives of many delegations for their expressions of condolence and their condemnation and denunciation of Palestinian terrorism and for their appeals for the resumption of negotiations. We have noted with satisfaction that our appeal in the course of our explanation of vote before the vote seems to have been heeded by a number of delegations and that a certain message, be it muffled, appears to have been transmitted today to the Palestinian side. Fourteen months of violence and Palestinian terrorism have done nothing to advance their cause. The results of the vote today testify to that.

Even within an organization in which, at times, a certain majority forms a kind of wall, we saw today some cracks in that wall: openings towards a fairer, more independent vote. Some other delegations too have noted the glaring inadequacies of draft resolution A/56/L.22, entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine". In their statements in explanation of vote, the Permanent Representatives of those delegations worked to bridge the deepening gulf the Palestinian delegation is digging with that draft resolution.

In our view, this terrorism should be understood in its terrorist dimension: to describe it in terms of a cycle of violence is incomplete. We are convinced that the international community is duty-bound to denounce Palestinian terrorist practices without ambiguity, without understatement, without lexical subtleties. It is by recalling the true nature of Palestinian terrorism, unmasking it and denouncing it for what it is that we can truly help the Palestinians become committed to dialogue, coexistence and peace.

The Palestinians mention Israel's "excessive use of force" and "extrajudicial killings". Perhaps one day the Palestinians can explain to us how the Palestinians, in their commitment to suicide terrorism and to mowing down Israelis by the dozen, are not engaging in the excessive use of force. Can our Palestinian partners tell us whether, with their implacable suicide attacks, they are departing from certain legal norms? In the Jerusalem and Haifa attacks there was no moderate use of force or, unfortunately, any act of justice. Justice will be restored to the Palestinian and Israeli peoples when peace is established through dialogue, through education for peace, through an end to hatred and incitement, and through absolute and total renunciation of the weapon of terrorism. Here I recall the 9 September 1993 letter from Yasser Arafat, dated four days before the signing of the Oslo accord, in which Chairman Arafat, in order to attain his strategic political ends, undertook to renounce all forms of terrorism. It is to those words of that letter that we should return.

In conclusion, I associate myself with the hope expressed by the Permanent Observer of Palestine, His Excellency Mr. Nasser Al-Kidwa, and in my turn express the hope that next year we can return here under much better circumstances.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): As Chairman of the Arab Group for this month and as one of the sponsors of the draft resolutions adopted today, Egypt would like — without detailing political positions that are well known to all — to explain its position on draft resolution A/56/L.22. Many delegations proposed amendments to that text to reflect the incidents of the past two days and the terrorist acts that took place on Saturday and Sunday, which were condemned by Egypt and other members of the international community, including the Palestinian Authority.

As one of the sponsors of the draft resolution, we would have been prepared to accept the amendment proposed by some countries; we too proposed a small amendment to make the text more balanced and to reflect the situation, not only that of last weekend, but also that of this morning, when, as we have seen on television, excessive force was used in Gaza. Regrettably and significantly, our proposal was not accepted: the sponsors of draft resolution A/56/L.22 agreed that reference should be made to terrorist acts and to the need to put an end to terrorist acts because they are convinced that such acts are illegal and harmful to peace and should be condemned. Regrettably, the countries that had proposed the earlier amendment did not accept our proposed reference to restricting the illegal use of force. That raises grave concern.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation is grateful to all delegations that voted in favour of draft resolution A/56/L.24, entitled "The Syrian Golan". The Assembly's adoption of that draft resolution means a great deal to our people and to all those struggling for liberation and for an end to foreign occupation.

The resolution sends a clear and unambiguous message that is beyond doubt: that occupation is unacceptable and has been rejected; that the building of settlements and the trampling of the rights of peoples are unacceptable and have been utterly rejected.

The General Assembly has sent a very clear message to Israel about the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force. This is something that concerns all the world's peoples; all countries want an end to this occupation. The resolution further expresses the Assembly's deep concern at the fact that Israel has not withdrawn from the Syrian Golan, which has been under occupation since 1967, contrary to the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. The Assembly is thus clearly announcing a policy that should be understood by the party that occupies the territories of others. The Assembly has also declared that the Israeli decision of 14 December 1981 to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the occupied Syrian Golan is null and void and has no validity whatsoever. It determines once more that Israel's continued occupation of the Syrian Golan and its de facto annexation constitute a stumbling block in the way of achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region.

The voice of the international community should be heard. The occupying Power should listen to this voice and should understand that the current situation cannot be resolved without its withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories and the restoration of the legitimate, inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. Any attempts to distract the attention of the international community from the real reason behind all the problems that the Middle East is facing as a result of the Israeli occupation are doomed. Peace and security are integral; one cannot be achieved without the other.

The President: I call on the observer of Palestine, who wishes to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): I must acknowledge that I do not understand the procedural aspect that was followed after the vote. This is an issue that could be looked into at a later stage.

I must also confess that I do not understand what the representative of Israel said regarding the results of the vote, except that the traditional position of Israel is one that does not respect the absolute majority of Assembly members. Israel has rejected all United Nations resolutions — those of the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and so forth. Not a single resolution has been adopted in favour of the point of view of Israel, and for the simple reason that it is illegitimate. It runs contrary to the provisions of international law and those of the United Nations Charter.

The draft resolutions that were adopted today fall into this context. It is my hope that the representative of Israel — that the Government of Israel — will understand the pronouncements of the international community as they are, rather than what they wish them to be.

As a representative of a people under long-term occupation, I feel extreme pain. I sincerely feel pain when the representative of Israel lectures us about morality as to what should or should not be; he is simply representing an occupying force. On the same moral basis, could we possibly expect him to condemn foreign occupation? Could we hear him condemn State-sponsored terrorism? Could we hear him condemn extrajudicial executions? And could he condemn the continued serious violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention? How about war crimes? Settler colonialism? Bringing colonialists and settlers to our land? The acquisition of one third of Gaza's territory to give to 4,000 settlers and the expulsion of more than 1 million Palestinians living below the line of poverty?

Israel's immoral and illegitimate practices have caused hatred, anger and rejection of Israel's colonialism. We do not condone such practices. The representative of Israel should not try to give the impression that what he represents is a moral position. The Israeli practices run contrary to all morals and ethics, and putting an end to such practices is a sine qua non for peace. Do not push the Palestinian people even further. Do not try to drag the region into a total war. What you have practised against our people is more than enough. It is enough.

Please stop giving us lectures on morality and ethics. Stop lecturing the General Assembly and other organs of the United Nations, because this will lead to nothing. It is unfair and unjust, and it will only lead to more tension and animosity. Look at your practices, and try to end them in favour of peace in the region.

The President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 41.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.